DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 410 603 CS 509 560

AUTHOR Tallmon, James M.
TITLE The Thrill Is Gone: Rediscovering Pathos and Style in Debate.
PUB DATE 1996-11-00
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (82nd, San Diego, CA, November 23-26, 1996).
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Debate; *Ethics; Higher Education; *Instructional Effectiveness; Public Speaking; *Rhetoric
IDENTIFIERS Aristotle; Campbell (George); Logos (Theology); National Education Debate Association; *Pathos; Weaver (Richard M)

ABSTRACT

This is a polemic on the need to rehumanize collegiate debate. Viewed as a reform movement insofar as its primary concern is to revitalize public debate, the National Education Debate Association (NEDA) ought to be mindful of the ethical implications of its aims in the same way that a repairman fixes what is broken: by concentrating, not on the thing in a state of disrepair, but on its ideal state. Debate ought to be a humane and therefore humanizing game. For Aristotle, rhetoric was a counterpart of both dialectic and ethics; of logos as well as pathos. In "Language is Sermonic," Richard Weaver states that an honest rhetorician has two things in mind: a vision of how things should go ideally and ethically, and a consideration of the special circumstances of his auditors. George Campbell's "Philosophy of Rhetoric" explicates a faculty psychology-based view of the human soul that constitutes a framework within which to teach the dynamics of the relationship of pathos and style to persuasion. His view has pedagogical merit, to be sure, but a limited vision of humanity. According to Weaver, "man is not nor ever should be a depersonalized thinking machine." (CR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 410 603

James M. Tallmon

"The Thrill is Gone: Rediscovering Pathos and Style in Debate"

"Rhetoric may be defined as the application of reason to imagination for the better moving of the will." Sir Francis Bacon

This is a polemic on the need to rehumanize collegiate debate. Now, I like to begin my polemics with a barb from Richard Weaver; on this ocasion, that thought is found in the opening movement of the final essay in *Visions of Order*, "The Reconsideration of Man":

> Not only the character but also the degree of a culture is responsive to the prevailing image of man. For what man tells himself he is manifests itself soon enough in what he does and may even pre-determine what he can do. Historically speaking, man has been many things to himself, but the variation is only one side of the story. For if man has been many things, he is also one thing. Hovering over all the varieties is a harmonious ideal of man by which he must be judged if progression is to be at all possible. . . . Now there are some images of man which impede this by holding people down to a low level of awareness and potentiality. The student of culture **[or the coach of debate]** will be critical of all images **[or practices]** that threaten true reaction--that is, reversion toward a poorer and less truthful concept of what it means to be a human being (134).

I view N.E.D.A. as a reform movement insofar as its primary concern is to revitalize public debate. A reform movement like N.E.D.A. ought to be mindful of the ethical implications of its aims in the same way that a repairman fixes what is broken; by concentrating, not on the thing in a state of disrepair, but on its ideal state. I think we all agree that debate ought to be a humane (and therefore humanizing) game.

CS 509560

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Tallmon

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Let us recall, at the outset, how, for Aristotle, rhetoric is a counterpart of both dialectic and ethics; of logos as well as ethos and pathos. Plato's plan for rehabilitating rhetoric at the end of *The Phaedrus* influenced Aristotle's approach to the subject:

> A man must know the truth about all the particular things of which he speaks or writes, and must be able to define everything separately; then when he has defined them, he must know how to divide them by classes until further division is impossible; and in the same way he must understand the nature of the soul, must find out the class of speech adapted to each nature, and must arrange and adorn his discourse accordingly, offering to the complex soul elaborate and harmonious discourses, and simple talks to the simple soul.

Plato here calls for an art of rhetoric that utilizes dialectic (division of knowledge into classes until further division is impossible) and is grounded in the study of souls and the appropriate means for moving each type (rudiments of audience analysis). *The Rhetoric* analyzes precisely these elements. Also in a fashion reminiscent of Plato, Aristotle notes that "ethical studies may fairly be called political." Why? Because, as we read in both Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics*, the aim of the science of politics is to educate a good citizenry. Unfortunately, Aristotle's treatment of ethics in *Rhetorica* turns out to be what we moderns associate more with psychology, and his treatment of style in Book III is rather cursory (he routinely refers the reader to *The Poetics* for a fuller excursus). Aristotle, given as he was to classification and schematizing knowledge, does not there examine the relationship of pathos and virtue, so his *Rhetoric* alone does not provide the material from which a polemic such as the one here proposed is best built.

Let us turn to George Campbell to elucidate that conception of style and pathos that will provide the blueprint for rehumanizing debate, and to Richard Weaver to draw out the ethical implications that motivate such an enterprise. In the latter we find the ethics of rhetoric, proper; a set of implications that probably would not have occured to Aristotle

while he lectured on rhetoric, because he presupposes a doctrine of human good--the one delineated in *The Nicomachean Ethics*. In the former we find an account of the human soul that provides the framework for a robust doctrine of style and pathos; an account that was developed fully a millenium after Aristotle wrote. One ought to consider both what is there to rediscover and why it is knowledge worth reviving.

Our epigraph, Bacon's definition of rhetoric, presupposes faculty psychology. Briefly, faculty psychology constituted a primitive account for the constituent parts of the soul: will, appetite, reason, imagination, memory, and so on. It was by means of faculty psychology that Bacon and his contemporaries attempted to account for the various phenomena peculiar to human beings (e.g., acquisition of knowledge, humor, persuasion.)

This is the understanding of the human psyche that undergirds George Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Campbell there recommends that the rhetor must consider his or her audience as "men in general." (i.e., as endowed with reason, memory, imagination, passion, emotions and will) and also adapt his or her rhetoric to the particular audience. The relationship that obtains between the various faculties may be expressed in syllogistic form:

Action is the aim of persuasion.

Passion is the mover to action.

There is, therefore, no persuasion without moving the passions.

As Campbell puts it, "When persuasion is the end, passion must be engaged" (77) for "Passion is the mover to action, reason is the guide" (78). Hence, that rhetoric is supreme which combines reason and imagination. Passion animates our ideas; it gives them the power to move the soul. But how does one excite the passions? Entreé the canon of style!

From the exuberant stores of imagination "most of those tropes and figures are extracted, which, when properly employed, have such an efficacy in rousing the passions" and awakening the emotions. Campbell thus establishes that, in order to move an

audience, the rhetor must picque the imagination and thereby excite the emotions with lively ideas; Vivacity is produced by use of sublime language.

It is noteworthy that, although Campbell provides an account of the movement of the soul, it is an almost utterly physiological account. No doubt smitten with the new learning, Campbell paints a rather mechanistic picture of "men in general." Richard Weaver's vision of rhetoric, on the other hand, presupposes a view of personness that constitutes a humanistic ethic par excellence.

In *"Language is Sermonic"* he posits that:

> Rhetoric seen in the whole conspectus of its function is an art of emphasis embodying an order of desire. Rhetoric is advisory; it has the office of advising men with reference to an independent order of goods and with reference to their particular situation as it relates to these. The honest rhetorician therefore has two things in mind: a vision of how things should go ideally and ethically and a consideration of the special circumstances of his auditors. Toward both of these he has a responsibility (211).

Not only the debater, but the opponent and the judge are humanized by such a rhetoric. It is their imagination which is picqued; maybe even exercised. However, appeals to imagination alone will not have the desired humanizing effect. One could feed the more prurient demands of fancy and cultivate the base nature; the dark horse in the famous allegory of Plato's *Phaedrus*. Garbage-In-Garbage-Out.

Given that caveat, I would argue that by "better moving of the will" Bacon meant precisely what Quintilian, Augustine, Aquinas, and Weaver mean: "moving the will in the direction of the Good." Weaver puts it best: ". . . rhetoric at its truest seeks to perfect men by showing them better versions of themselves, links in that chain extending up toward the ideal, which only the intellect can apprehend and only the soul have affection for. …

Rhetoric appears, finally, as a means by which the impulse of the soul to be ever moving is redeemed" ("Phaedrus," 24-25). This supreme rhetoric combines the analogical with the logical and appeals to the whole person, neither solely to our base nature nor to our calculative faculties alone. Aristotle, imperial intellect that he was, examines exhaustively what it means to be fully human, and that treatise he entitled *The Nicomachean Ethics.*

Final Movement

Aristotle first establishes that the highest aim (telos) for humans is happiness, and, further, that happiness or blessedness (eudaemonia) is secured by means of virtue (arete). Happiness is a product of "the Good life" or the life lived well. (It is important to remember here that arete may be translated either as excellence or virtue.) Aristotle devotes the bulk of the *NE* to a discussion of the process by which individuals become virtuous, or, as he put it, the process of ordering the soul. We consider excellent those persons with well-ordered souls.

There are two types of virtue; intellectual and moral. Intellectual virtue "owes both its birth and growth to teaching," while moral virtue grows through habit. Aristotle then asserts that "none of the moral virtues arises in us by nature; for nothing that exists by nature can form a habit contrary to its nature." If the moral virtues do not exist in us by nature, how do we acquire them? Aristotle responds that: "Neither by nature . . . nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit" (1103a). Moral virtues then, are learned. They do not arise in us by nature, but we are equipped by nature, through the operation of intellectual virtues, to learn to make correct choices, and over time, correct choices become habitual.

The Greeks knew this concept as ηχις (hexis)--moral habit developed through exercising right reason. Aristotle summarizes his discussion of virtue by saying it "is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean" (1107a). In other words, once the individual has developed the habit of choosing the right thing at the right time for the

right reason, virtue will be his "second nature." The novice must consciously deliberate over means, ends, and extremes. The truly virtuous person, however, need not deliberate in order to make good choices, because he has-- based on prior education and habitual inclination toward the good--developed the habit of making good choices. The well ordered soul is a soul whose movement is rightly affected, and, as was established earlier, movement requires pathos. Had Aristotle provided a less psychological and a more ethical treatment of pathos in *The Rhetoric,* it may well have focused on such cognitive connections. At any rate, debate practiced along such lines would actually humanize contestants and judges rather than turning them into logic chopping machines: "They really, really work! Only $19.95 plus shipping and handling. Not available in stores. Some restrictions apply. Offer void where prohibited.. . ."

Restoring debate to a humane practice will entail rediscovering pathos and style. Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* explicates a faculty psychology-based view of the human soul that constitutes a framework within which to teach the dynamics of the relationship of pathos and style to persuasion. Campbell's view has pedagogical merit, to be sure, but the vision of humanity that he puts forth is somewhat limited. Weaver suggests why it is important both to have a robust vision of personness and a conception of rhetoric adequate to the elevated station of persons in the Weaverian/classical economy. Aristotle completes the exposition by suggesting for us how debate practiced along the lines here proposed will accomplish its humanizing function.

As I began, so let me close, with a gem from Weaver: ". . . man is not nor ever should be a depersonalized thinking machine. His feeling is the activity in him most closely related to what used to be called his soul. To appeal to his feeling therefore is not necessarily an insult; it can be a way to honor him, by recognizing him in the fulness of his being" (LS, 224).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE